

## **BEWARE OF FALSE FASTINGS**

January 29, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

There is an amazing amount of religious activity in North America today which is called "revival" or "renewal." Thousands of Christian leaders and tens of thousands of church members are joining hands to fast and pray. One million men are participating in a movement to produce spiritual families. "Clergy" are meeting in small groups across the land to confess their sins and to join hands for God's power. Strangely, though, this enthusiasm, for the most part, has not resulted in greater biblical purity in the churches, denominations, and organizations involved, nor has it halted the fearful moral and spiritual decline which is evident in society at large.

A key reason for this is the misplaced and unscriptural focus in these "revivals." An example are the end-of-year fasting conferences which have been held the last three years. These were started by Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright in 1994. Bright conducted a 40-day fast that year, and later, six hundred Christian leaders joined with him in Orlando, Florida, to fast and pray.

In November 1996 the fasting conference was held in St. Louis, Missouri, and 3,700 Christians participated. Bill Bright said they were there to repent of "racism, denominationalism, and the country's moral decline." Charisma magazine, in its report on this meeting, noted: "The presence of so many charismatics and Pentecostals at the St. Louis event--including charismatic pioneers Derek and Ruth Prince--**DRAMATICALLY DEMONSTRATED HOW DENOMINATIONAL BARRIERS ARE WEAKENING IN THE CHURCH TODAY.** Prayer sessions included charismatic-style worship, and everyone seemed comfortable raising their hands while singing choruses such as Raise Up an Army, O God and Refiner's Fire, A SONG POPULARIZED BY THE TORONTO BLESSING" (Charisma, January 1997, p. 16).

Every church needs a powerful revival today, but I don't believe this is biblical revival and I don't believe those are the chief things for which the average ecumenical-type church leader needs to repent today. What about repentance for refusing to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, for refusing to label apostate denominations like the Roman Catholic Church as non-Christian, for refusing to label Christ-rejecting Modernists as unbelievers? What about repentance for caring more about ecumenical unity than for pure biblical truth? What about repentance for being focused on the positive and refusing to deal with the negatives aspects of New Testament Christianity? What about repentance for refusing to obey the Bible's commands to mark and avoid false teachers? What about repentance for refusing to obey the Bible's commands to preach righteous and modest Christian living, for neglecting to preach against the rampant sins of carnality, divorce, adultery, fornication, immoral music, wickedness in the movies and television? What about repentance for failing to preach against the idolatry which is so common among professing church members today? The

idolatry of sports, of pleasure, of prosperity. I am talking about repentance for neglecting to preach forthrightly against the sins which are so rampant and common among the average church members today. What about repentance for turning the house of God into a worldly carnival show, for allowing musicians to become entertainers instead of humble, Spirit-filled ministers, for allowing carnal rock rhythms to be brought out of the bars and dance halls into the church of God? What about repentance for perverting the New Testament church into a man-made denominational entity, or for refusing to lift the voice against those who have done so? What about repentance for allowing women to assume positions and ministries which the Word of God forbids them to assume? What about repentance for allowing humanistic philosophy to be brought into the house of God under the guise of Christian psychology?

Fasting is an important and powerful spiritual weapon. The Bible speaks much of it. God's people should practice it more frequently in these evil days. We have a long entry on fasting in the Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity. The Lord Jesus Christ said there is a spiritual stronghold which can be brought down by nothing but prayer and fasting. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). We have seen many wonderful miracles accomplished in response to prayer with fasting.

Fasting, though, is not a magic potion. The Bible says it is better to obey than to sacrifice. **SIMPLE OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN A HUNDRED 40-DAY FASTS.** King Saul had to learn this. He was instructed to destroy the Amalekites and all that they possessed. Instead, Saul saved the best livestock and destroyed only the undesirable beasts. He also saved the Amalekite leader. God rebuked the disobedient king through His prophet:

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE**, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22,23).

Saul did not think it was a great wrong to disobey in small ways. Did he not destroy most of the Amalekites and some of their livestock? Did he not have a good reason for not destroying all of the livestock? Was he not going to offer of it to the Lord for a sacrifice? None of that mattered to the Lord. **TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.** God said Saul had rejected the word of the Lord. Half-obedience is no obedience. That is God's opinion on the matter.

I repeat, simple obedience to the Word of God is more important than a hundred 40-day fasts.